

THE RISE OF PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE

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THE RISE OF PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE

Theoretical Perspectives, Reforms
and Employment Trends in the
Era of Economic Crisis

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FOREWORD

This book is an endeavour by two social scientists from different backgrounds to offer an explanation and measurement of precarity. The first part of the book, written by Orestis Papadopoulos, includes a sociological and political economy approach to the concept of precarity, delineating the different definitions of and theoretical engagements with the concept. Based on a structural account of the current socio-economic system, the contribution of the first part is to recognise the structural reasons behind the emergence of flexibility and insecurity and the ways that employers' strategies and states' policies serve profit-oriented goals at the expense of employees' rights and security. To substantiate these claims, the book provides a policy analysis of the labour market developments before and after the crisis analysing how European workers' sense of security has been undermined due to these changes, leading many employees to becoming more precarious. There is a recognition that employees' sense of security has been significantly reduced since important factors of the post-war employment landscape such as collective agreements, labour movement's strength and very high growth rates have declined while new economic powers challenge the dominance of western powers and create competitiveness pressures not seen before. The second part of the book, written by Ilias Livanos, provides an empirical

investigation of the various concepts used around the measurement of precarious employment in practice. This part recognises that an all-inclusive measurement of precarious employment cannot be achieved as it often means different things to different people, while the measurements adopted are often influenced by data available and the limitations entailed in them. The second part of this book utilises arguably the most comprehensive socio-economic dataset available in Europe, the European Union Labour Force Survey, in order to quantify various aspects of precariousness, offering comparable evidence across member states but also over time, capturing thus the impacts of the economic crisis of the last decade or so. The overarching aim of this book is to capture a long existing phenomenon, which has intensified dramatically over the last few years, consisting perhaps of the most profound legacy of the economic crisis and all the reforms accompanied with it.

The opinions expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors and do not represent the official position and views of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). All results and conclusions are those of the authors and not those of Eurostat, the European Commission or any of the national statistical authorities whose data have been used.

Ilias Livanos and Orestis Papadopoulos,
July 2018.